

T H E
L O U N G E R.

[N^o XVI.]

Saturday, May 21. 1785.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

S-I R,
YOUR correspondent Mrs Careful has given a very just picture of the Female Loungers, in her entertaining letter. The disturbance which the morning visits of those idlers give to sober families, is become matter of very serious concern to many a mother in this town, who would wish to educate their daughters in such a way as to qualify them for performing their parts with propriety, in whatever rank they may be called to.

Idleness and frivolity seem to form the character of the times: According to the present system of female education amongst us, the culture of the mind and heart, the knowledge of those useful duties which a good wife and a good mother owes to her husband and her children, are but slightly attended to, if not altogether neglected, for those exterior accomplishments which ought properly to be the handmaids of the former. Hence the dissipation of individuals, and the final wreck we often see of families!

The task I am going upon is a melancholy one; to illustrate the truth of the above observation from my own woeful experience: yet, as it may be a caution to others, I think it a duty on me to communicate to you the following narrative.

I was married, a few years ago, to an amiable young woman, the only daughter of a wealthy and respectable merchant. My father-in-law, Mr *Lumber*, had gone early to the West Indies, where he was so successful in trade as to make a very considerable fortune, with which he returned to settle in his own country: As he had raised himself, and had few relations, to supply that want, he married a daughter of the Honourable Mr *Stingy*, younger brother to the Earl of *Loftus*, by which connection he at once acquired relationship with a score of Honourable and Right Honourable cousins, some of whom did him the honour to breakfast, dine, or sup with him almost every day.

Mr *Lumber* was a sensible man in his way, and had seen a good deal of the world; he might therefore have managed his family in a manner much more to its advantage than that in which it was conducted, had he been allowed the perfect guidance of it: But in this he was a good deal restrained, from the circumstance of his inferior birth. It was impossible for the son of a plain citizen to understand any thing so well as the grand-daughter of a Peer: He was contented therefore to maintain a sort of divided empire: He was allowed to superintend the education of his two boys, who, after having been some time in a respectable house in Holland, now assist in carrying on the business in their father's counting-house. As to his daughter, he left her to the management of her mother, and of her aunt Miss Bridget Stingy,

a maiden Lady, who lived in the family. As my grievances all took rise from that root, I must be indulged in mentioning the characters of these Ladies.

The circumstances of Mr Stingy did not perhaps allow of giving his daughters the most liberal education; but what he might have given, he did not think it necessary to give: to be the daughters of the Honourable Mr Stingy, and grand-daughters of the Earl of Loftus, was enough, without any other endowment. Bred with high ideas of birth and rank, they were ignorant of almost every branch of useful knowledge; and as most of their time passed alternately amongst their quality relations, they had learned to despise taking any concern in the useful employments of domestic life.

On the death of the Honourable Mr Stingy, Miss Bridget, his eldest daughter, was left to the care of her relations: but as they appeared rather cool with regard to her, she was, by the benignity of Mr Lumber, brought home to his house, and to ease and plenty, if she could have used them with good humour and discretion.

This Lady was several years older than her sister Mrs Lumber, a weak good-natured woman, over whom she assumed a superiority and direction more than was consistent with her situation, and which Mr Lumber, though a good-humoured man, did not at all times approve of. In place of making herself and her sister happy in the enjoyment of the real blessings which they possessed, Miss Stingy's chief study was, to teach her sister a number of wants to which she was not intitled as the wife of a merchant. To many of these Mr Lumber gave way; such as, adding another servant to the table-arrangement, who plied behind his Lady's chair in a plain suit and ruffles; changing the post-chaise into a body-coach; and promoting Jack the driver to the rank of John, Coachman. But, to the no small disquiet of Miss Bridget, Lumber was inflexible to his wife's demand, of a weekly route and card-assembly. This, and several other indulgences, she did not find Mr Lumber silly enough to grant; but she generally found Mrs Lumber silly enough to resent the refusal.

But, to end this digression, which I am afraid has already tired you, and to proceed to my own story.—Mr Lumber being my banker while I was abroad, on coming to Scotland, I was often invited to his house, where I was treated with great hospitality and attention. Miss Lucy Lumber, his only daughter, was young, handsome, good-natured, and sprightly. Her vivacity, her good humour, and her good looks, attracted my attentions, and I thought I discovered that she was not displeased with them. I was in that situation in which the world suggests the propriety of a man's looking out for a wife, and in which he begins to think it his duty to be married. The qualities Miss Lumber possessed were attractive; and I never thought of those she might want. In short, I was in love: I courted; I was accepted of; and, as every man in my situation would say, made completely happy.

After passing some weeks in a round of mirth and dissipation, I carried my Lucy, with a companion of hers, to my house in the north.

The visits of my neighbours, and our returns to them, with the

the little parties which we made, gave me but little opportunity for observation, or a thorough knowledge of my wife's qualities or turn of mind. She wanted not sense at bottom, had good nature, and, bating a little tincture of that pride of ancestry, or rather vanity, for it never was offensive, which had early been inculcated into her by her aunt Bridget, she had a sweetness and affability that was extremely engaging. We passed the summer very agreeably. When winter set in, I began to know more intimately my wife's disposition. I had presented her with a small selection of books for her closet; the best of the British Poets and Historians, some of moral entertainment, such as, the Spectators, Guardians, &c. and some for mere amusement. But I soon found that my Lucy was no reader. She read *Tom Jones* indeed; and on my recommendation to her and Miss Flounce, they went through the greatest part of *Gil Blas*; but of the two scholars of Salamanca, I am afraid they ranked with the first.

By the good management of an experienced housekeeper, who had been brought up in the family by my mother, and who I knew had a real liking to the family, my house, table, and domestics had been regulated. On my marriage, I was in hopes that without entering into the executive part, my Lucy would now, as mistress of the family, superintend the whole domestic œconomy: But in this I was disappointed. She never had been used to look into household-management; it was a province, she said, she was not adapted for, and wished not to engage in. She would now and then quote maxims which I could perceive she had learned in the *Loftus* school. They signified, that household cares might become ordinary women, but were degrading to the descendants of people of quality.

When we were not engaged with company, my farm and planting, my dog and my gun, kept me a great part of the day in the field. When I returned, I did not always find from my wife that chearful animated look that used to welcome me home. When at times I remarked this, she would suddenly resume a gaiety of countenance, and endeavour to smile away my observation. But as this gaiety was assumed, its continuance was short; and with great uneasiness I now began to see a change of disposition in my Lucy, and that a lowness of spirits at times hung upon her: This I attributed however to her situation, as, to my great joy, she was, as my friend John Home expresses it, "As women wish to be who love their Lords."—Mr Lumber had kindly invited us to town, and we determined to pass the winter with him. We were received with great joy, and found that family much the same as we had left it.

My Lucy brought me a fine boy; and while she recovered her health, I flattered myself that she would soon also regain her former sprightliness and good humour. In this I was not disappointed; we got into the fashionable circle of company, and that continual round of dissipation that goes on in the metropolis: The whole forenoon generally spent amidst a succession of visitants, a mob of idlers; the rest of the day in dinners, public places, and evening-parties.

Although in my own mind I despised the giddy restless insignificants that figured in this perpetual drama; yet as I considered myself

myself as a passenger only for the time, I submitted to be carried along with the stream, and partook of the flying amusements, as they occurred. I did not lose sight, however, of my own scheme: as the spring approached, I gave hints of my return to Homely Castle, and announced the day for our departure. My Lucy, who never disputed my will, prepared herself; but I could observe that she became grave and thoughtful, as the time approached for our setting out. We left our friends, and got safely home.

The smiles of our little infant were for some time his mother's sole amusement; but this, as mere amusement, for it carried no active employment along with it, after some months began to lose its relish. The feeble exertions which too late she endeavoured to call to her aid, were too weak to resist the demon of Indolence, with langour and melancholy in his train, that now had invaded her. Such are the fruits of an education now I am afraid, but too common! Good natural parts, in place of being trained to exercise, in the several branches of knowledge, and useful employments of life, had either been neglected, or misapplied to frivolous and desultory amusements! Now, when out of the giddy round of the fashionable town-entertainments, that used to fill up her hours, my Lucy feels a vacant mind, that affords no resources within itself. Her reflections of course are painful and bitter; or if lulled at all, only sink into a lassitude, and listless unconcern for every thing around her. Her few former amusements, her tambour and harpsichord, have long become insipid; and even the smiles of her child, which used to give delight, now, I can observe, force a sigh from her, and sometimes the tear will start into her eye, from the painful reflection, no doubt, of her inability to perform to him the duty of a mother!

In this situation, Mr Lounger, judge of my distress and disappointment. Instead of family-happiness and domestic enjoyment, I find at home a constant source of disquiet and melancholy. Perhaps I am more unhappy than husbands whose wives are more blameable. In the greater offences against the marriage-duty, the injured party has the privilege of complaint, the support of resentment, the consolation of indifference, or of hatred. I have no contradiction of which to complain, no injuries to resent: I pity, nay I still love my wife; and yet I am most unhappy.

Tell my situation, Sir, to those young men who, like me—or rather tell it to mothers, who, like Mrs Lumber, have daughters to educate. Remind them, that, however important the education may be that teaches to adorn the mistress, and captivate the lover, there is still another, and a higher, which requires some little attention, that which instructs them to perform the duties of the wife, to retain the affections, and to constitute the happiness of the husband.—I am, &c.

HORATIUS.

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